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ABSTRACT

Through an interview with educator Yvonne Rodriguez, this article discusses Descubriendo La Lectura (DLL), the result of educators' efforts in the Collaborative for Reading Recovery in Spanish. It discusses background information about DLL, how it may be implemented, requirements for and means of teacher leader training, and the requirements for teaching children during training. The article further discusses "bridging," the process of learning how to take Reading Recovery from one language to another, and issues related to "bridging" in training teachers and teacher leaders. Finally, the article discusses professional development, and notes states with DLL sites. (SR)

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Descubriendo La Lectura: An Interview with Yvonne Rodriguez.

by Yvonne Rodriguez, Billie Askew and Dianne Frasier

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Descubriendo La Lectura:

An Interview with Yvonne Rodriguez

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Can you give some background information about Descubriendo La Lectura (DLL)?

As the number of children learning how to read initially in Spanish increases, the need to have an early intervention program for children at risk of literacy failure in Spanish also increases. In addition, the level of literacy success in the native language can affect later success in English literacy.

In 1988, educators in Tucson, Arizona, saw Reading Recovery as a program that could address the needs of at-risk Spanish-speaking readers. Several Reading Recovery professionals and bilingual educators across the country have since joined forces with Tucson to form the Collaborative for Reading Recovery in Spanish. Descubriendo La Lectura is the result of such efforts.

Descubriendo La Lectura (DLL) is the reconstruction of Reading Recovery for first graders whose initial literacy instruction is delivered in Spanish and who are at risk of failing to learn to read and write. Like Reading Recovery, the intent of DLL is to enable these first-grade Spanish-speaking students to read and write within the average band of bilingual classrooms. While the theoretical framework is the same as in English, there are differences in the ways in which teachers and students must interact in order to support literacy events in Spanish. The two languages function differently in many areas. Consequently, specific training is required to provide the most effective literacy support in Spanish.

Guidelines have been established to ensure that the integrity and quality of DLL is not compromised. These guidelines address issues related to the instructional setting of students, teacher and/or teacher leader training qualifications, training models, and participation in research and development activities. These guidelines will be interfaced with the Standards and Guidelines published by the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA), currently in the process of revision.

How does a district or site implement Descubriendo La Lectura (DLL)?

First of all, a school district or Reading Recovery site needs to have a bilingual program that provides native language instruction in Spanish. It is strongly recommended that native language literacy instruction continue through third grade. If the district's language policy only provides an English as a Second Language program (ESL), DLL training would not be appropriate for that system.

A Descubriendo La Lectura teacher leader must be in place in order to implement DLL. The site may employ its own DLL teacher leader or contract with a neighboring Reading Recovery site for the services of their DLL teacher leader.

The DLL teacher leader has the theoretical understandings necessary to discuss Spanish reading and writing processing behaviors with DLL teachers in training. When Reading Recovery teacher leaders and teachers observe DLL lessons, they are often struck with how similar it is to an English lesson. Student behaviors can be observed and discussed. However, the appropriateness of the teacher's decisions and level of prompting is not apparent. The surface similarities between Reading Recovery and Descubriendo La Lectura gives the false illusion that a monolingual English teacher leader can train and/or monitor a DLL teacher.

What are the requirements for DLL teacher leader training?

DLL teacher leader training has the same requirements as teacher leader training in English. In addition, the candidate needs to have bilingual certification and have a good command of oral and written Spanish. Bilingual certification does not guarantee fluency and proficiency. It is strongly recommended that teacher leader candidates have experience teaching primary age children in a bilingual setting.

How can a district get a DLL teacher leader trained?

Currently, there are two ways to pursue DLL teacher leader training. One way is for the teacher leader to train at a University Training Center that has the appropriate resources for initial training in Spanish. During the training year, the teacher leaders begin by teaching their children in Spanish. As

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their training progresses, they begin working with some students in English. With a DLL trainer, DLL teacher leaders-in-training can engage in discussions dealing with comparative linguistics. These discussions allow them to understand the similarities and differences between English implementation and Spanish implementation. In addition, these teacher leaders participate with the "bridging" course during the summer following their training. Consequently, the DLL teacher leaders will be able to teach a class in either Reading Recovery or Descubriendo La Lectura that following year.

The alternative is for the teacher leader to train in English at any University Training Center and to "bridge" to Spanish or DLL the following year. When taking this route, the teacher leader has an additional year before training teachers in DLL.

During DLL teacher leader training, what are the requirements for teaching children?

If the teacher leader trainer is monolingual, teacher leader candidates teach all four children in English because their primary role is to become a teacher leader. They need to develop understandings about Reading Recovery along with its theoretical constructs. Teaching children in English or Spanish hinges upon the language of the trainer. If they do not have a bilingual trainer, teacher leader candidates cannot work with bilingual students. Again, if the teacher leader trainer is bilingual, teacher leaders begin by teaching all 4 children in Spanish; they begin working with some children in English as their training progresses.

If DLL Teacher Leader training is in English because the trainer is monolingual, what is required for DLL "bridging?"

"Bridging" is the process of learning how to take Reading Recovery from one language to another. Teacher leaders who understand Reading Recovery and the procedures for teaching children in English have to shift their thinking to teaching procedures in Spanish. They have to look carefully at the differences between the two languages. Theoretical aspects are the same; however, the teaching procedures may have to shift because the Spanish language functions differently from English.

"Bridging" begins with a two-week initial training and then continues for a full academic year. During those initial two weeks we explore issues related to language differences and why there may be slight variations of teaching procedures or differences in sequencing. We also look at bilingual issues which may impact the implementation of DLL. This is an important aspect of the DLL training because many of our teacher leaders/teachers will have different bilingual programs in their school districts and they need to be able to address relevant issues. They could be working in a district where the language policy is stated, but schools may implement that policy differently. Implementations can and do differ.

If the DLL teacher leader has a trainer who is bilingual, the trainer could do the initial training in Spanish. Those teacher leaders would then require "bridging" from Spanish to English, either during the training year or in a subsequent training experience.

Once the DLL teacher leader participates in the "bridging" class, does the teacher leader have the capability of teaching children and teachers in either language?

During the year following her "bridging" class, the teacher leader works with children in Spanish and in English. She will not train DLL teachers until the following year. The "bridging" year is for the teacher leader to become a teacher of Reading Recovery in Spanish.

How much interaction do the teacher leaders have with the person responsible for DLL "bridging" during the course of the "bridging" year?

The teacher leaders should be monitored on a monthly basis. The teacher leader sends the trainer reflections on what s/he is learning from teaching her children. Videos and records are also submitted to the trainer. It is more advantageous to have face-to-face observations and discussions, but this depends on proximity. For long distances, there are two visits by the trainer during the "bridging" year. The trainer observes the teacher leader teaching children in English and Spanish, conducting a school visit, and guiding the inservice session with demonstration lessons behind the glass. The trainer also meets with district and school administrators about the implementation of DLL.

Where is "bridging" for teacher leaders?

We are currently working on interfacing the DLL guidelines and standards with the RRCNA guidelines and standards. Originally, "bridging" began in Tucson, Arizona, with a trainer/teacher leader team at the University of Arizona and expanded to a trainer/teacher leader team at Texas Woman's University and California State University at San Bernardino.

Currently "bridging" is available for teacher leaders in the summer at Texas Woman's University. Interested parties can contact Yvonne Rodriguez for information about "bridging" or to inquire about possible alternative sites for "bridging" in the future.

What are the requirements for DLL training as a trainer of teacher leaders?

We see the importance of having the same requirements for DLL trainers as we have for English trainers. Teacher leader course work is at the post master's level and, therefore, requires a trainer with a doctorate. The current use of a teacher leader

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specialist is a temporary one and must be approved by the North American Trainers Group and the DLL Standing Committee of Reading Recovery Council of North America. It is very important to build a cohort of DLL trainers who meet the same criteria as trainers meet for Reading Recovery in English.

How does "bridging" for teacher leaders differ from "bridging" for teachers?

"Bridging" for teacher leaders is more comprehensive because they will be dealing with training of teachers and implementation issues as well as teaching procedures. "Bridging" courses offered by University Training Centers provide this level of "bridging."

"Bridging" from English to Spanish or Spanish to English requires an additional year of training. This training requires university credit that reflects the type of training the teachers are receiving during their "bridging" year.

We suggest a problem-solving conversation with your University Training Center to explore acceptable ways to "bridge" teachers. Currently, the DLL Collaborative is exploring issues involved in acceptable and unacceptable "bridging" practices. Until standards and guidelines are formally proposed, sites should work directly with their University Training Centers to plan for "bridging" teachers.

What does professional development look like for DLL teacher leaders?

Similar to professional development for all teacher leaders, DLL professional development focuses on issues related to theory, teaching, training, and implementation. Some DLL procedures are not as refined as others, such as text selection. Also, there are fewer books available in Spanish in some levels which makes text selection more difficult. Language differences are particularly reflected in making and breaking and in writing; these differences are explored in professional development sessions. Behind-the-glass sessions are needed to deal with linguistic differences. Issues of implementation include the nature of language use in the bilingual classroom in which the child is placed.

At Texas Woman's University, we have been having an annual DLL professional development session, and that is not enough. This year we are going to attach a day to each English professional development session that will include behind-the-glass sessions. It is important that teacher leaders also continue to attend the English professional development offerings in their particular network.

What states have DLL sites?

Currently 8 states have DLL teachers or teacher leaders or have DLL teachers or teacher leaders in training. These include Arizona, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey (New York), Rhode Island, Texas, and Washington.

Does DLL have a booklist?

Teacher leaders have access to a DLL booklist for the purpose of DLL training.

Is there a bibliography of DLL professional reading?

The bibliography is also available through the DLL teacher leaders. (See Publications and Products on p.14.)

Are there other issues that need to be addressed?

The DLL collaborative is very aware that we need certified DLL trainers and we are pursuing that need as a top priority. The trainers will have the same requirements as an English trainer plus they will have to be bilingual.

Yvonne Rodriguez is currently training as a trainer of teacher leaders for both English and Spanish at Texas Woman's University. Anyone interested in such training should contact Texas Woman's University.

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